
21. (Amended) An implant for implantation in a middle-ear chamber, said implant comprising:

92 a plurality of balloons formed from a pliant membrane, said balloons configured to fit within said middle-ear chamber with at least one of said balloons at least partially in contact with the eardrum, each of said balloons having an equivalent volume selected to permit said eardrum to respond to incident acoustic waves to an extent that permits the perception of sound.

22. (Amended) A surgical method for treating middle-ear hearing loss of a patient, said method comprising:

positioning a balloon in the patient's middle ear at least partially in contact with the eardrum, said synthetic balloon being formed of a thin pliant membrane of biocompatible material such that said balloon has an equivalent volume high enough to permit sound-induced motions of the eardrum, ossicles, and the round window membrane to an extent that permits the perception of sound by said patient, said pliant membrane being substantially impermeable to water and to gases during extended contact with body tissues.
